5: Blom & LaFarge A, E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Bachajón

The country near the village has been farmed out long ago; now the fields lie at a distance in the jungle. After every concentration, the Indians drift away again like blown smoke. Today most of the houses are rotten, sagging, with gaping doors. The paths are grown up with weeds, huge, old moss-covered crosses lean at crazy angles by the main trails. Over all broods the frame of the sacked church, huge stone walls with rank vegetation around them, and a twisted, unhealthy oak-tree on one side, like a composition by Piranesi.

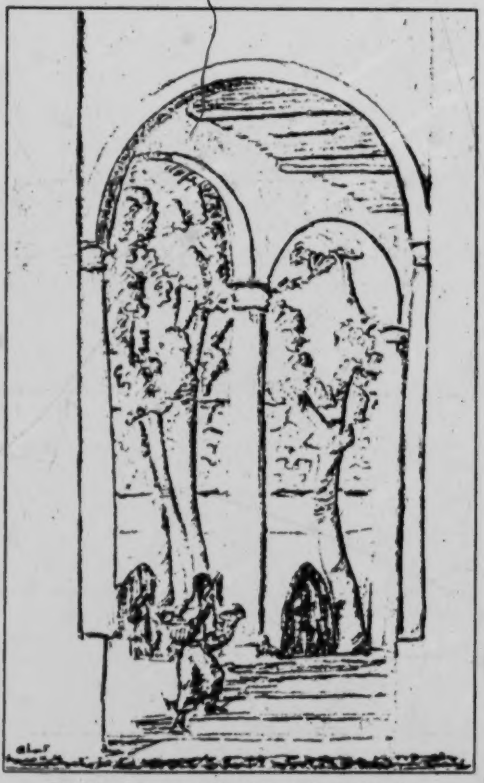

Fig. 277—Ocosingo, Chia. Colonnade on the Plaza.

Ocosingo Valley and its neighbours furnish a transition towards the real highlands. The valleys are fertile and green, ringed in with ranges of steep, rich hills. The soil in the lower parts is light; here palms and pines grow together, with a luxuriance of rich grass that makes an ideal grazing country. Through the valleys are large and small ranches of Ladinos and old Spanish families. The bigger ones, such as San Antonio, Quechil, and Achin in the Ocosingo Valley, San José Reforma and El Real beyond the San José Pass, and Tecojá in its own valley, each has a village of Indian labourers attached to them. The natives' houses are rather better that the average, and often tile-roofed (fig. 278). The Indians of each ranch function more or less as a tribe, governed by the owner of the ranch, conducting their own worship at its chapel. A few Indians own scattered, independent farms. Sivacá (*sivak ha'*, "Gunpowder Water"), near Ocosingo on the trail to Tenango, is a true village, self-governing, with its own *alcalde*, under the supervision of a Ladino *maestro*. All these groups come together at

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970

NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

241 indicate these bases and assess the efficiency of the agriculturalists in allocating resources of labor, land, and seeds.

423 311 [175] *Land use.* The historical factor of the greatest significance in establishing the present economic position of the town was the act of possession of ejido lands in 1937. The first grant included 4,873.53 *hectares*[1] of land of the following categories:

irrigated flat land	139.77
non-irrigated plots	1,018.37
pasture	1,659.65
hill land	2,055.74

The high hill land with its cover of pine and scrub oak was set aside for use of all members of the community for hunting and gathering firewood. The pasture lands are similarly controlled by the civil authority for common use. The cultivable lands passed into the hands of 385 ejidatarios, each of whom received one-half hectare. A further grant in 1954 provided an increase of 2,578 hectares, including:

low mountain land	2,277.60
pasture land	300.40

423 178 The possession of land by individual small-plot cultivators reversed the trend toward large-scale commercial agriculture begun in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The land of the Indians that had been expropriated in the latter part of the nineteenth century by forced sales was to be held in the possession of the townspeople, "benefiting all with its products and uses" (Act of possession, 1937, Town Archives).

423 241 311 178 With the increase in ejido lands acquired in 1954, the share of each ejidatario has been increased to one hectare. This is usually split between low land in San Caralampio and high land in San Isidro and Tulancá, giving two growing seasons. The advantages of different growing seasons are that there is a more balanced work schedule and that there are two harvests, one in November and one in July. The ejido land grant has stabilized subsistence crop cultivation in the economy of the town and in-

1. A hectare is equal to 2.46 acres.

creased the economic independence of the Indians. The present total of 613 ejidatarios in 1965 has increased 59 percent since the original grant. The dependence of the town's economy on the ejido land can be assessed in the fact that 63 percent of the pasture land is held in ejido grants. The use of land resources in the township is summarized in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Agricultural Productivity by Size of Landholding

Size of landholding (hectares)	*Weight of produce (kilograms)*	*Value of produce (pesos)*	*Land used (percentage)*
Less than 5 hectares			
Corn	200,000	120,000	83.
Wheat	29,000	27,550	16.8
Fruit	3,008	9,000	.2
1 hectare of ejido land			
Corn	319,688	223,781	49.
Corn (with beans)	30,320	21,224	6.
Beans (with corn)	14,000	17,360	
Wheat	185,580	181,580	28.
Beans	84,322	104,322	17.
More than 5 hectares			
Corn	67,388	45,117	34.
Corn (with beans)	96,550	68,108	51.
Beans (with corn)	42,985	56,746	
Alfalfa	350,000	42,000	4.6
Fruit	14,508	9,720	4.4
Other			6.

SOURCE: 1960 census, Mexico.

According to the 1960 census figures on productivity per hectare, privately owned plots under five hectares yield the highest return in corn (1,097 kgs. per hectare), privately owned plots over five hectares the next highest return (925 kgs. per hectare), and ejido plots of one hectare the least (810 kgs. per hectare). In the census evaluation of wheat and corn production on privately owned plots of less than five hectares, wheat apparently yields a higher return (807 pesos per hectare of wheat compared with 658 pesos per hectare of corn). This relative return is nearly the same for the corn produced on ejido lands (820 pesos per hectare return on wheat compared with 603 pesos for corn). However, this is figured at the maximum market price for wheat of 124 pesos per 100 kgs.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

owned plots of less than five hectares, corn is clearly the major crop, with 83 percent of the land devoted to its production. In the ejido lands, it is cultivated on less than 50 percent of the land, with wheat and beans sharing the remaining lands. Included in the category of ownership of five hectares or more are three large fincas where cattle fodder is grown. These fincas employ eighty-three laborers, some of whom live in the town center.

Since the Mexican census figures do not take into account the total land holdings of the household, I shall refer to the data on land use from my own census in 1964 (Table 5). Beans are grown (except in three cases) only if the household has more than the one hectare of ejido land grant. Corn and beans are grown together only on irrigated lands, both in high lands and in low country. Most farmers with ejido land grow wheat in addition to corn only when the land is in continual production, since it is believed that wheat gives "heat" to the land and improves the soil. This belief is supported by the real value of crop rotation.

Decisions concerning what crops to plant where are based on two sets of criteria: topology and soil characteristics. These criteria, furthermore, are the basis for determining what kinds of seed should be planted and what techniques of cultivation should be utilized.

Topological criteria. Because of the relative wealth of land resources, the steep hills are left uncultivated. All of the steep hills are communally owned, and the second growth of pine and scrub oak provides firewood. Tall pine growing in the higher lands of the colonia of San Vicente is sold by the community to private lumber companies.

The "belly of the land," the mound-like hillocks at the bottom of the hills, are sometimes cultivated or used for pasturage. On hilly lands farmers put rocks in the banks or curve the rows of corn to avoid erosion. The very low lands of the valley floor must be drained by digging ditches.

The flat irrigated lands of the valley floor are the most desirable lands for cultivation. The Indians are reluctant to sell these lands, and hold on to them until they are forced to sell.

When the officials reach concensus on what the mean yield (or *medio calculo* as they call it) is, they multiply this by the known amount of seed planted. Every six years a house-to-house census of what was planted is made.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
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231 cattle was seized by bandits or soldiers. It is "new" only in the size of the
233 holdings, which have expanded from ownership of one or two head per household, primarily useful as draft animals, to a herd as large as two hundred head belonging to the wealthiest man in town. Cattle rearing is now a capital investment for resale as well as for draft animals in plow agriculture.

233 The increasing herds have stimulated competition for community re-
311 sources. The control of communal grazing and waterhole rights is exer-
312 cised through the traditional dual division of the town, with rights to pas-
621 ture allocated on the basis of residence in the upper or lower barrio of the
575 center. An association of cattle owners has developed in each of the sections, and the leaders of each association call together all members to clean the water holes and repair the troughs. A recent project of the cattle association of the upper section has been the erection of a large cross at the
[789] water hole. The water had dried up the year before, and the installation of the cross was an attempt to ensure a continuous supply of water in the fu-
[096] ture. The priest blessed the cross in the dedication, and the fiscal and prayer-reciters adorn it each year on May 3, the Day of the Cross in the old Catholic calendar, along with other crosses of the village.

233 Cattle grazing is the source of much of the conflict in the town. The cat-
621 tle roam freely in the woods and communal pasture lands, and many are
578 lost or stolen. The cattle association has not fenced in the pasture in order
575 to control it. Their tactics have been punitive; they have raised funds from
627 among members to hire men to kill suspected cattle thieves. In the last twenty years, six men have been killed as cattle thieves, and at least three of those were known to be killed by men hired by the association, which then paid the court fines to set the killers free. The leader of one of the cattle associations was killed after an incident in which he fined a man who had failed to assist in cleaning the water holes. The fine of 2 pesos per head of cattle represented a large fee for the man, who had sixty head. He refused to pay more than half, since he said he had not been notified.
[754] When his daughter later died of illness, he blamed her death on witchcraft exercised by the cattle association leader, and later killed him.

231 Cattle are only minimally exploited as a resource. The cattle are not
434 butchered locally since there is not a large enough market, but are sold to

8: Hunt E-4,5 (1958)1962 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango
Aguacatenango

000 animals. The domesticated animals include dogs, horses, burros,
231 cattle,[1] hogs and chickens.

311 To summarize, the villages are located in the same ecological zone. In addition to this, both villages have extended their cultivated lands into the lowlands, down to about 1,500 meters above sea level, where semi-tropical and tropical products are grown (Kaplan, 1956-57, 1958; Wagner, 1959, Part II, Section 5).

Archeology

172 Although the Chiapas Highlands seem to have been occupied from the late Pre Classic, Local Phase Sak (Adams, R.; 1961:342) the first evidence of occupation within the valleys belongs to the Late Classic and Early Post Classic. A few archeological sites of this period are located on the tops of small hills and ridges around the flat-bottomed areas in which today's towns are located.

Adams (1961) interprets the sites as having been independent communities, characterized architecturally by a lack of attention to ceremonial structures, conspicuous absence of sculpture, and a certain emphasis on fortifications and defensive positions, indications of some sort of warfare. Surrounding the sites there is evidence of small hamlets and of agricultural terracing, but

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[231] [1] Cattle were introduced in the area a long time ago, but
[177] were not adopted by the Indians of Amatenango and Aguacatenango
[648] until very recently. They are more and more of a problem for the milpa agriculturalist, because with the system of open range grazing, the cattle constantly invade the milpas, and are a continuous threat for the villager, plus a source of friction between Indian and Ladinos, especially cattle ranch owners.

628 438 571 608 582 628 166 602 establish with them the relations of posada and compadrazgo, mentioned above, as well as (in the infrequent cases of inter-community marriage), some affinal kinship ties. In the few recorded cases of emigration from the village, some members of the community keep communication with a few consanguineal relatives living in other Indian villages, although social exchanges and the memory of such relatives tend to die out after a generation or two.

105 With the other Indian communities in the area, Amatenango and Aguacatenango share a common material culture and belief system, derived from a Highland Maya cultural tradition, the same linguistic background, and a subsistence pattern based on agriculture. They are peasant, in the sense that they are rural villages which depend, for survival, not only on agricultural work, but on economic exchange with other semi-urban and urban centers (Redfield, 1956:25-28).

438 [273] Aguacatenango buys pottery and chayotes from Amatenango, whose women come periodically to sell them, and trago (drinking alcohol) which some Amatenangueros produce illegally. Amatenango buys from Aguacatenango surplus corn.

628 [311] 312 The two towns have amicable relations, thinking of each other as neighbors, and sharing the same pasture lands, and source of water for irrigation. The two communities share the 628 776 same cultural hero, called Juan Lopez in Aguacatenango and Lopez Shuntón in Amatenango, connected with the corn and with the "lightening who lives in a cave." For Aguacatenangueros this personage is the builder of the roads, responsible for the eradication of "cannibalism," the conversion of man-hunting animals

8: Hunt E-4,5 (1958)1962 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
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Aguacatenango

The central plaza contains the Church, the local government offices, the school and the National Indian Institute (INI) cooperative store (see below), in Amatenango this list being increased by the INI clinic. Around these plazas (open squares) the houses are relatively concentrated, the population density is high and the size of the sitio (a household plot) small. (There are about seven or eight sitios in a block one hectare in size.) Toward the margins of the town the houses thin out, being surrounded by milpas. Well established family groups live toward the center, while newcomers, poorer families and deviants live toward the periphery. Sitios within the center are highly valued in both communities, the outskirts of the town being closer to the unknown dangers of the monte (hill and forest) with its malevolent spirits (animal souls of witches in the search of victims, owners of the caves, etc.).

Surrounding the villages one finds the communal grass lands for pasture and the irrigated milpas. The grass lands and the water source for the milpas de regadío (irrigated corn fields) are shared by both villages, although Amatenango makes use of the water first, since the stream flows through Amatenango before it reaches the Aguacatenango lands.

Towards the hill slopes the milpas de temporal (corn fields depending on seasonal rain) are planted in scattered small groups, fenced together against the invasion of cattle;[1] and alternating with forested patches.

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[1] See footnote 1, p. 17.

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The rights over land given to the villages by the Spaniards were not contested by the Mexican Government, but during the last century there have been some redistributions of the boundaries to better fit changes in the size of the population of the different villages in the area. Besides, although it was not legally approved, large chunks of the territory of the communities were taken away by the local ranchers who had the backing of the state politicians. As a result of the land invasion by the ranchers, the villages of Amatenango and Aguacatenango controlled, until recently in this century, very little land, mostly temporal, the better land being in the hands of the local ladino ranchers. After the Mexican Revolution of the twenties, the fincas (ranches) were expropriated by the national government, according to new policies of agrarian reform, and under the presidential regime of Avila Camacho were returned to the villages as Ejidos (cooperatively owned land).

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The territory of the villages is divided today, by use, into land for agriculture (?ulabal [irrigated], pomultik [hot-country] and temporal), land for residential sites, and land for lumbering and pasture. Within the communities the over-all authority that controls land is the Ayuntamiento, the body which forms the civil branch of the civil-religious government that is the ultimate authority in village affairs. The Ayuntamiento controls both the communal lands and the Ejido lands.

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The Ejidos function very much like the communal lands, in that they are "owned" by the community. Every household head is a member of the ejido cooperative, and has rights to cultivate a parcel within the ejido. According to the Mexican Agrarian Code,

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